Abstract

The present study aimed at exploring and describing apology strategies among Kurdish bilinguals in Ilam, Iran. It attempts to systematize the various strategies used for the purpose of apologizing from the pragmatic point of view. The current study involves 80 subjects of Kurdish bilinguals in Ilam, consisting of 40 male and 40 female subjects. The subjects were chosen randomly to participate in this study. The data of this study was collected through a controlled elicitation method based on a questionnaire which is a modified version of ‘Discourse Compilation Test’. Descriptive and inferential statistical such as T-Test have been used to show the meaningfulness of the relationship between education of respondents and their apology strategies. The prime finding of this study revealed that there is a meaningful relationship between education and apology strategies used by Ilami people. The results indicated that respondents have frequent tendency toward using “explanation”, “taking responsibility” and “offer of repair” strategies. So, they do not have much inclination toward intensification and concern for the hearer. EFL learners and teachers can be benefited from the findings of this pragmatic study.

Keywords: apology strategy; gender; bilinguals; speech act; Kurdish

1. Introduction

“Apologies are defined as primarily social acts, carrying effective meaning” (Holmes, 1990, p. 1550). According to Brown and Levinson, apologies are politeness strategies. An apology is primarily a social act. It is aimed at maintaining good relation between participants. To apologize is to act politely, both in vernacular sense and in more technical sense of paying attention to the addressee ’s face needs (Brown and Levinson, 1987). An apology is a

* Corresponding author. Tel: +98-9185102095;
E-mail Address: h_gowhary@yahoo.com
fundamental speech act which is a part of human communication occurs in every culture to maintain good relations between interlocutors.

Olshtain (1985) defines an apology as “a speech act which to intended to provide support for the hearer who was actually or potentially affected by violation”. When one offers an apology, one shows willingness to humiliate oneself to an extent that make an apology a face-saving act for the hearer and face-threatening act for speaker. Apologies fall under expressive speech acts in which speakers attempt to indicate their attitude. In order for an apology to have an effect, it should reflect true feelings. One cannot effectively apologize to another and truly reach him/her unless one portrays honest feelings of sorrow and regret for whatever one has done (Gooder and Jacobs, 2000).

Gooder and Jacobs (2000) pointed out that the proper apology acknowledges the fact of wrong doing, accepts ultimate responsibility, expresses sincere sorrow and regret, and promises not to repeat the offense... some of the features of the proper apology are the admission of trespass, the implied acknowledgment of responsibility, and expression of regret, and a promise of a future in which injury will not recur. An important aspect in resolving a conflict is the fact that it takes two parties to start an interpersonal conflict and two parties to resolve it (Takaku et al, 2001). If the wrong doer decides to apologize and the offended person does not allow him/her to defend his/her position, the apology will be useless. If the offended waits for an apology and wrong doer does not thin. Takaku et al (2001) believe that an apology must have so-called three Rs: regret, responsibility, and remedy, all of which a wrong doer must show for the offended to take his/her apology as sincere.

Apology challenges the Gricean (1975) view of polite talk as a deviation from rational and efficient talk. Within a Gricean framework, polite ways of talking “show up as deviations, requiring rational explanation on the part of the recipient, who finds in consideration of politeness reason for the speaker’s apparent irrationality of inefficiency” (Brown and Levinson, 1987:4). “On most occasions, apologizing for an offense is very evidently in the speaker’s interest and thus, at least in the longer term, is undesirably rational behaviour and an efficient use of communicative time” (Holmes, 1990:157). Grice’s maxims involve a distorting perception of much every day talk in western societies they simply don’t take account of the paramount importance of social or effective goals in such exchanges.

The apology strategies which are conducted by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984; Trosberg, 1988 can be categorized as follows:

An expression of apology: (an expression of apology / IFID; an expression of regret, and request for forgiveness. For in this category, an apology is done via an explicit illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) (Searle, 1969: 69). IFID is a category encompassing the explicit use of apology expressions that mean sorry, forgive me etc. (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984: 206).

An explanation or account: Is an expression that gives an account of the cause of the offense. In other words, the speaker explains why violation or damage happened. Both explicit and implicit explanations have been considered.

An acknowledgement of responsibility: This term refer to expression in which the apologizer admits to having responsibility for the offense. The respondent explicitly takes responsibility for the offense, such as accepting the blame, regretting, committing, the apology, indicating lack of intent and for admitting the offense. Taking on responsibility is the most explicit, most direct and strongest apology strategy.

An offer of repair: S may attempt to repair or pay for damage caused by the offense. An offer of repair is usually expressed explicitly. While expressing an offer of repair is usually associated with the future time, expressing that show the repair has already been done.

Promise for forbearance: In certain situations, the speaker may promise not to repair the offense in future. While in most studies of apologies, promise of forbearance is a separate category. In Bergman and Kasper (1993) it is classified alongside ‘concern for the hearer’ as verbal redress. Promise of forbearance is a clear confession being responsible for the offense and performing it damages S’s positive face wants, while concern for the hearer does not necessarily imply any sense of responsibility and carries no risk of damage to S’s face.

Intensification: Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) treated intensifications as an element within an apology strategy and not a separate strategy. However, the force of apology depends not only on the choice of an apology strategy but also on the number and type of strategies used in an apology that consist of an IFID only (I am sorry ) does not have the apologetic power of another that contains an IFID and an intensification maker (I’m deeply sorry ). Alongside the use of adverbials (e.g. very ) with the IFID and the repetition of the IFID, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984)
classified ‘concern for the hearer’ and use of more than one strategy as intensification using multiple strategies as an intention of intensification is depend on the type strategies used.

Denial of responsibility: Denial of responsibility is the last apology strategy investigated in this study. Expressions in this category range from those in which respondents avoid taking responsibility to expression to which they directly blame another party.

Based on this introduction, the following question is formulated.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research question

Is there any relation between education of participants and their apology strategy?

2.2. Hypotheses

As it will be explained, since apology strategy includes six categories (intensification, explanation, taking responsibility, concern for the hearer, denial of responsibility, offer of repair), so it can be formulated in one main hypothesis and six sub-hypotheses:

Main Hypothesis:
There is no meaningful relationship between education of the respondents and their apology strategy.

Subsidiary Hypotheses:
1. There is no meaningful relationship between education of the respondents and intensification strategy.
2. There is no meaningful relationship between education of the respondents and explanation strategy.
3. There is no meaningful relationship between education of respondents and taking responsibility strategy.
4. There is no meaningful relationship between education of respondents and concern for the hearer strategy.
5. There is no meaningful relationship between education of respondents and denial of responsibility.
6. There is no meaningful relationship between education of respondents and offer of repair strategy.

2.3. Participants

The current study involved 80 subjects of Kurdish bilinguals in Ilam, Iran, consisting of 40 male and 40 female subjects (47 B.A and above B.A, 33 under B.A) that were chosen randomly to participate in this study.

2.4. Instrument

The data of this study was collected through a controlled elicitation method based on questionnaire which is a modified version of ‘Discourse completion Test ‘(hereafter DCT) used in CCSARP (Blum-Kulak 1984). This type of questionnaire enables the researcher to reach large number of respondents and statistically control for variables and analyze the data accordingly. Research on the methods used in speech act and pragmatics studies pin pointed the limitations of the DCT in comparison to that of naturally occurring data: the DCT responses are found to be shorter, less face-attentive and less emotional (Gloat 2003). In spite of its disadvantages, the researchers believe that the DCT can be useful instrument for providing a preliminary look at cultural preferences in the performance of apologies, such as the present study attempts to do.

2.5. Data collection

The test is composed of twenty situations representing different social contexts. In order to identify the apology strategies used, the researcher used tables to clarify the method used to show the other apology strategies employed in each situations and their percentage. In the present study descriptive and inferential statistical techniques such as
T-test have been used to show the meaningfulness the relationship between gender, age, language and education of respondents and their apology strategies.

First of all, a questionnaire was designed based on Blum-Kulka (1984) and some articles. This questionnaire consisted of 20 different situations. It was designed in Persian and participants were asked to answer in Persian. The data of this study was collected based on strategies that respondents answered in each situation and each strategy were classified based on models that used in western study about apology strategies. Collecting and analyzing the data was done in April, May and June 2014 and the participants were chosen randomly in Ilam.

3. Results

In this study, it was tried to find the effect of education as the independent variable of the study on the use of apology strategies as the dependent variable of the study.

The main purpose of this study was to find the relationship between education and apology strategies. Since apology strategy includes six categories (intensification, explanation, taking responsibility, concern for the hearer, denial of responsibility, offer of repair), so it can be formulated in six sub-hypotheses which entails that: There is no meaningful relationship between education of the respondents and each one of these six factors which are: intensification, explanation, taking responsibility, concern for the hearer, denial of responsibility and offer of repair. To deal with this issue, T-test has been employed.

1. There is no meaningful relationship between education of the respondents and intensification strategy.

This hypothesis is tested by T-test.

Table 1. T-test for investigating the relationship between education and intensification strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Value</th>
<th>mean</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under B.A</td>
<td>2.874</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>1.2987</td>
<td>0.3214 – 0.9514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.A and above</td>
<td>2.251</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.9874</td>
<td>0.2518 – 0.7965</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to the obtained results in table 1 on the relationship between education and “intensification” strategy used by respondents, it is observed that there is no meaningful relationship between education and this strategy, since the obtained T from these groups is 0.000, and the error coefficient is less than 5%, so this hypothesis is accepted.

2. There is no meaningful relationship between education of the respondents and explanation strategy.

To deal with this issue, T-test has been used.

Table 2. T-test for investigating the relationship between education and explanation strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Value</th>
<th>mean</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under B.A</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.9874</td>
<td>0.2518 – 0.7965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.A and above</td>
<td>1.101</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.2518</td>
<td>0.7965</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be inferred from table 2 on the relationship between education and “explanation” strategy, it is seen that there is no meaningful relationship between education of participants and their “explanations” strategy, since the obtained T from under and above B.A is 0.000, and the error coefficient is less than 5%, so this hypothesis is accepted.
3. There is no meaningful relationship between education of respondents and taking responsibility strategy. Again, T-test has been used.

Table 3. T-test for investigating relationship between education and taking responsibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Value</th>
<th>mean</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under B.A</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>1.6571</td>
<td>0.2874 – 0.8724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.A and above B.A</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>0.7877</td>
<td>0.3211 – 0.7023</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As displayed in the above table, the obtained T from under and above B.A is 0.000, therefore it can be said that there is no meaningful relationship between education and taking responsibility, since the error coefficient is less than 5%, therefore this hypothesis is accepted.

4. There is no meaningful relationship between education of respondents and concern for the hearer strategy. To deal with this issue, T-test has been used.

Table 4. T-test for investigating the relationship between education and concern for the hearer strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Value</th>
<th>mean</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under B.A</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>0.7877</td>
<td>0.3211 – 0.7023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.A and above B.A</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.8521</td>
<td>0.2874 – 0.8724</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The obtained results after employing T-test shows that education of respondents is an effective factor in “concern for the hearer” strategy used by under and above B.A, since the obtained T from these groups is 4.98 and error efficient is more than 5%, so this hypothesis is rejected.

5. There is no meaningful relationship between education of respondents and denial of responsibility. Likewise, T-test is run again.

Table 5. T-test for investigating the relationship between education and denial of responsibility strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Value</th>
<th>mean</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under B.A</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.8521</td>
<td>0.2874 – 0.8724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.A and above B.A</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>0.7877</td>
<td>0.3211 – 0.7023</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Above table 5 indicates that T-value of scores obtained by respondents is 0.001, so it is obvious that there is no meaningful relationship between education and “denial of responsibility” strategy, since the error coefficient is less than 5%, thus this hypothesis is accepted.

6. There is no meaningful relationship between education of respondents and offer of repair strategy.

Table 6. T-test for investigating the relationship between education and offer of repair strategy
As it can be figured out from table 6 there is no meaningful relationship between education of respondents and “offer of repair” strategy, because the obtained T from under and above B.A is 0.009 and error efficient is less than 5%, so this hypothesis is accepted in Alfa level (5%).

4. Discussion

According to the results obtained in this study, it can be said that the independent variable of the study which is education was found to be an effective factor in using apology strategy. Education has role on using apology strategy (concern for the hearer) by Ilami people. The pattern of using this kind of strategies was similar in men and women participants. The strategies were used more by the participants were explanation, taking responsibility and offer of repair and the strategies with the low amount of use were intensification and concern for the hearer. As data show that the subjects have a frequent tendency toward using these strategies in their act of apology because they attempt to preserve their positive face by avoiding the frequent use of some apology strategies such as concern for the hearer and intensification which are more damaging to speakers face. Instead they sometimes relied on less dangerous strategies carry on direct signal of apology and may therefore be used by the respondents as an explanation. The general result of this study is in harmony with results of apology strategies used by American and Jordanian speakers of English (Hussien and Hammouri, 1998). They found that Jordanian use more apology strategies than Americans. Both groups use the expression of apology, offer of repair, taking responsibility more frequently.

The results of this study are, however, in contrast with results of apology strategies among EFL learners in a study by Fariba Chamani, Shariati .M (2007), that revealed education is not an effective factor in apology strategies.

References